

Using Storytelling to Teach Imagery

LANGUAGE LEVEL: Beginning
GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

LANGUAGE: ESL
FOCUS LLS: Imagery

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE: Listen to and recall the story in preparation to retell it
STRATEGY OBJECTIVE: Use imagery to understand and recall the story

STRATEGY RATIONALE: Forming mental images or drawing pictures helps one remember the information or story plot. Linking pictures to events is a natural and fun way to learn. Even as early as elementary school, students can use and discuss the strategy of *imagery*.

MATERIALS: None

PROCEDURES

Preparation

1. Gather students in a circle on the floor, and introduce the story you are going to tell. Make sure to tap into students' *background knowledge*, and encourage *predictions* about the story. Before you begin, ask students what they will do to remember the story. Write ideas on the board, and comment positively about them.

Presentation 1

2. As you begin to tell the story, ask students to close their eyes and listen. Stop at an appropriate spot in the story, and ask students what they imagine the characters are doing in the scene. For example, you might ask, "Does anyone see a picture of the scene? What do you think the characters look like? What do you see?" Ask volunteers to respond by describing what they see. Tell students that they are using a learning strategy called *imagery*, or making pictures.

"You are using a very good strategy to remember the story by making these pictures. It is called *imagery*. Can you say that word? Imagery. Imagery means making pictures. [Write "imagery" and "making pictures" on the board.] You all made pictures in your minds when I was telling you the story. Why did you do that? [Write down their comments, and respond positively to them.] I also use the strategy of making pictures because it helps me remember things that I hear, read, or study. The clearer I make the image, the better I remember."

3. Demonstrate the strategy. As you continue the story, describe what you are seeing in your mind.

Practice 1

4. As you continue the story, encourage students to practice using the strategy.

"As I tell the story, I want you to practice the strategy of *imagery*. I will stop to ask you what pictures you have made in your head."

5. At another appropriate place in the story, stop and ask students for their images. Finish the story in this fashion, asking students for their images when the opportunity allows it.

“What images do you have in your mind? Has anything changed from the first time?”

Presentation 2

6. After reading the story, draw a quick sketch of your mental image to demonstrate how drawing is also part of the strategy.

“I can also make my images on paper to help me remember the story. I am going to draw a few pictures to remind me of the most important things that happened in the story.”

Practice 2

7. Have students work in groups to draw pictures that will help them remember the story. Later that day, or the next day, have students retell the story again, using their drawings.

Evaluation

8. Once you have finished reading the story, begin your discussion by asking several students to retell the story. (Focusing on the *imagery* should help students to report more detailed accounts of the story.) During or after your discussion of the story, hold a discussion about strategy use. Ask students to raise their hands if making the pictures helped them remember the story. Ask them to raise their hands if they would use the strategy again.

Expansion

9. Discuss with the students other contexts in which they can use the strategy. For example, if students are reading in English or their first language, tell them that they can use this strategy when they read on their own. They can also use the strategy when learning vocabulary.

10. Ask students to use the strategy of *imagery* at home as they have a family member tell them a story. Tell them that they can make pictures in their minds or on paper. The next day, they will share their stories with their classmates.

Suggestions for applications to other languages and levels:

This strategy can be used with any language or level. For older and more advanced students, focus on how to transfer the strategy from a storytelling situation to a reading or listening situation.

Contributed by Jennifer Delett